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SUBJECT: NEW AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR CALLS ON AMBASSADOR
KHALILZAD

Classified By: Ambassador Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. On September 6, the Ambassador and DCM met with recently-arrived Australian Ambassador Innes-Brown. Ambassador Innes-Brown said that the Australian opposition is very keen to withdraw from Iraq and that PM Howard may visit Iraq in the next six months. Australia is revising its Iraq aid program in light of security concerns. Innes-Brown has heard that constitutional review might be delayed, and he questioned the stability of the Maliki government. END SUMMARY.

Australian Domestic Opposition and Possible PM Visit

¶2. (C) Ambassador Innes-Brown said that Iraq has become a "major political issue" in Australia and that "the opposition is very keen for us to leave." The current situation has become "a rocky road" for Australia to travel. (NOTE: Australia has approximately 1,300 troops in Iraq. END NOTE) Australian PM Howard will probably visit Iraq sometime within the next six months, according to Innes-Brown.

Revising the Australian Aid Program

¶3. (C) Australia is revising its aid program in light of Australian concerns about security. According to Ambassador Innes-Brown, the Australian aid program does not want to have its staff on the ground in Iraq. As a result, they are training Iraqis in Jordan and Australia. The Australians are also working with the Italian Embassy on some aid issues.

Constitutional Review May Be Delayed

¶4. (C) Regarding constitutional review, Innes-Brown said that Vice President Tareq al-Hashimi wants to delay constitutional review for a three year period. According to al-Hashimi, PM Maliki also supports delaying constitutional review.

Questions About the Stability of the Government

¶5. (C) Innes-Brown expressed concern about the stability of the Maliki government. He has heard that Vice President Adel Abdul Mehdi is fomenting discontent. The Ambassador replied that some Cabinet positions may be reshuffled, but that no viable alternative to Maliki has emerged.

¶6. (C) BIO NOTE: Ambassador Innes-Brown presented his credentials to the Iraqi government on August 28. Prior to assuming his current post, he was head of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs' Iraq Task Force.
KHALILZAD